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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 3383
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 1201
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 1068
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 1637
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASHGABAT 000225

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/12/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [EAID](#) [SOCI](#) [TX](#)
SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: SKEPTICAL AMU DARYA VALLEY
RESIDENTS BRACING FOR FLOODS

Classified By: Charge Richard E. Hoagland for reasons 1.4(B) and (D).

¶1. (C) Although the Government of Turkmenistan continues to maintain that it is taking steps to prevent flooding along the Amu Darya River, residents and officials in flood-prone districts are not taking those assurances at face value, according to a local Embassy staff member whose sister works for Turkmenistan's Red Crescent Society (please protect). According to the sister, villagers all along the Amu Darya, worried that the frozen waters in Tajikistan will lead to massive flooding this year, are literally living out of suitcases, believing that they will be given very little time to move once the ice melts and the waters start rising. (NOTE: The last time Turkmenistan experienced a winter as cold as this -- in 1968 -- there reportedly was major flooding, with whole districts under water. END NOTE.)

¶2. (C) Local officials, too, are beginning contingency planning for flooding. The FSN's sister said several local district heads have been going on their own initiative to the Red Crescent, asking for assistance in the form of warm clothing, bedding, and anything else that the Red Crescent could provide to uprooted residents. The head of the Red Crescent Society in Turkmenistan went to Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers Hydyr Saparliyev, who bears responsibility for Red Crescent activities, and asked for permission to offer relief. Saparliyev turned down the aid, stating that the government will deal with any problems.

BERDIMUHAMEDOV'S EARS ARE TO THE GROUND

¶3. (C) Post separately learned that President Berdimuhamedov's January 19 trip to Turkmenabat was a direct result of the president learning of local leaders' concerns about possible flooding. It was only after the president traveled to the Amu Darya region that he put Deputy Minister of Defense Colonel Atabayev in charge of emergency preparedness. Colonel Atabayev is the individual who oversaw the dynamiting of the ice in the Amu Darya in mid-January. However, there reportedly have been no new indications that the Ministry is preparing in any way for flooding.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: The government's assertions that it halted

any threat of flooding when it began blasting the ice in mid-January are not based on scientific fact, since it is the much higher-than-average snow in the upper reaches of the Amu Darya, rather than just the build-up of ice, that will probably most affect the river's level. It is notable, however, that neither residents nor local officials are putting much credence in the government's ability to cope. Neither MOD's approach to flood prevention nor the Turkmenistan government's unwillingness to accept private assistance portend well for area residents when spring thaws start. END COMMENT.
HOAGLAND